

Department of Historic Resources

(www.dhr.virginia.gov)

For Immediate Release

June 20, 2007

Contact: Randy Jones, Department of Historic Resources;
804-367-2323, ext. 117; Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov

18 NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

***—For placement in the counties of Amherst, Arlington, Goochland, Hanover, Henry, King & Queen, King William, Louisa, Richmond, and Rockbridge;
and the cities of Hampton, Leesburg, Richmond, and Roanoke—***

RICHMOND – The Department of Historic Resources has approved for placement along Virginia roadways and public places 18 new historical highway markers, including nine that highlight the history of African Americans or Virginia Indians.

The nine markers are the result of an initiative of the Department of Historic Resources, in collaboration with the Virginia Historical Society, to sponsor and fund new highway markers that recognize the full diversity of Virginia's rich legacy with topics covering important events, people, and places relating to the history of African-Americans, Virginia Indians, and women. The markers stemming from this initiative are--

- “Bear Mountain Indian Missionary School,” proposed for installation at the school’s site in Amherst County, discusses the creation of this school for students of the Monacan Tribe, who, because of Virginia’s racial segregation laws, were barred from attending public schools until the mid-1960s. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- “Flora Molton 1908-1990,” for placement in Louisa County, honors one of the area’s great African American gospel musicians. After moving to Washington, D.C. in 1937, Molton “performed at festivals and clubs, recorded three albums, and was featured in two documentary films,” according to the sign.
- “Fourth Baptist Church,” for installation at the intersection of 28th and P streets in Richmond, highlights the first black Baptist Church in the Church Hill area. The marker notes that the congregation began meeting before 1861, and that the current building was constructed in 1884.
- “Dr. Charles Richard Drew 1904-1950,” to be installed in Arlington, focuses on the great advances Drew, an African American, made in the field of blood and plasma storage and transfusion.
- “Second Union School,” for installation at the building’s site on Rte. 606 in Goochland County, discusses the history of Second Union, the oldest surviving

Rosenwald school in Goochland. Julius Rosenwald, a philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., established a fund that led to the creation of more than 5,000 schools in the rural South for African American students.

- “Douglass Community School,” for installation in Leesburg, highlights the development of Loudoun County’s first high school for African American students.
- “Charles Sidney Gilpin 1878-1930,” for installation on St. Peter Street in Richmond, honors the acting career of Richmond-native Gilpin, who received a Drama League Award and NAACP Springarn Medal.
- “Giles Beecher Jackson ca.1852-1924” to be erected in front of the Giles Jackson building in Richmond, honors the first African American to practice law before the Supreme Court of Virginia; Jackson also helped organize the Southern Negro Business League as well as the Richmond Negro Exposition of 1915.
- “Oscar Micheaux 1893-1951,” to be installed near the former Strand Theater, on Henry Street in Roanoke, highlights the life of this pioneering African American film maker, who created up to six films while he was in Roanoke between 1922 and 1925, while operating his film corporation out of the theater.

The nine other markers approved by the Department of Historic Resources are as follows:

- “Martinsville Speedway,” for installation near this Henry County racetrack, discusses its role as “one of eight tracks to host the inaugural 1949 season” of NASCAR, as well as the track’s enduring place in the sport ever since. The marker is sponsored by the Martinsville -- Henry County Economic Development Corporation.
- Sponsored by the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, the sign “Lt. Gen. Lewis Burwell “Chesty” Puller,” for installation at the intersection of Rte. 30 and U.S. 33 in West Point, in King William County, honors Puller and his 37-plus years of military service, during which he received five Navy Crosses for heroism in combat.
- “Dr. William Fleming,” for installation in Roanoke and sponsored by Robert Gatten, Jr., discusses Fleming’s participation in the Revolutionary War, as well as his role as a physician throughout the Roanoke Valley.
- “Lower King and Queen Baptist Church,” for installation at the church’s site in King and Queen County, summarizes the history of Lower King and Queen Baptist Church, which sponsored the marker.
- Sponsored by the Fieldale Heritage Festival, the marker “Waller’s Ford,” for installation at the intersection of routes 609 and 701 in Henry County, highlights George Waller’s influence in the county and in the Revolutionary War.

- “Reuben Ford and Hopeful Baptist Church,” for installation at Montpelier, in Hanover County, discusses the origins of the Hopeful Baptist Church and the activities of its founding pastor on behalf of religious freedom after the Revolutionary War.
- “Saint John’s Church,” for installation at the church’s site in Warsaw, in Richmond County, discusses this church as an example of the revitalization of the Episcopal Church in Virginia after the Revolutionary War and the decline of the Anglican Church; the marker is sponsored by the church.
- “Oxford Church,” for installation at the church’s site, nine-plus miles southwest of Lexington, in Rockbridge County, highlights the formation of the Oxford Church congregation in 1758, as well as the construction of the current building in 1868; the marker is sponsored by the church.
- “Bunch of Grapes Tavern,” for installation at the corner of 600 Settlers Landing Road and South King Street in Hampton and sponsored by the Hampton History Museum Association, profiles this tavern, which burned in 1861, during the 1700s when Hampton was a busy colonial seaport.

The Virginia highway marker program, which celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, is one of the oldest in the nation. Currently there are 2,000-plus official state markers, mostly installed and maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

A new edition of *A Guidebook to Virginia’s Historical Markers* is an excellent reference for locating historical markers when traveling the Commonwealth’s roads. The book, released earlier this year, is available at bookstores throughout Virginia or can be ordered from University of Virginia Press or the Department of Historic Resources.

Funds for new highway markers come from private organizations, individuals, and local jurisdictions. More information about the Historical Highway Marker Program is available on the website of the Department of Historic Resources at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.